

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Demands Congress and the President Help the Unemployed

Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment, introduced an Assembly Joint Resolution today urging President Bush and Members of Congress to, as the first order of business for the 108th Congress, implement a retroactive extension of unemployment benefits for all unemployed workers. AJR 1 also asks Congress to pass legislation increasing the number of weeks of benefits for those who have exhausted their extension.

Approximately 110,000 California workers and their families had their unemployment benefits cut off with the December 28, 2002 expiration of the temporary federal program that assists them. Congress adjourned without providing further relief, leaving thousands of families without a reliable source of income.

The expired program, created in March, provided additional weeks of unemployment benefits to workers who exhausted their regular, state-funded benefits without finding a job. Currently, workers in California receive up to 26 weeks of state benefits, followed by up to 13 weeks of federal benefits.

The Resolution also criticizes the Congress and President for letting partisan considerations take precedent over the needs of working families. The House of Representatives refused to adopt a Senate-passed bill that would have extended federal emergency unemployment benefits to those whose state benefits have expired. At the time, President Bush did nothing to intervene.

"It's unconscionable that our national leaders would turn their backs on so many struggling workers and their families, especially this time of year," said Assemblyman Koretz.

While some expect a federal measure to pass this month, there is no guarantee that the legislation will cover all those who have lost their jobs due to the struggling economy.

"President George Bush, Sr. extended the program several times, providing 26 weeks of extended benefits to all the unemployed and more weeks in those states with especially high unemployment," said Koretz. "Our current President should support the same extension his father adopted. No more and no less. Extending these benefits is sound economic policy and desperately needed by the nation's workers."

AJR 1 is also co-authored by Assemblymember Juan Vargas (D-San Diego), Chair of the Assembly Insurance Committee, and Assemblywoman Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa), Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Workforce Investment.

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